

“Bath Salts” Frequently Asked Questions

What are “bath salts”?

“Bath salts” is a “designer drug” that has recently become available. This is a powerful drug that causes severe side effects. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in the New Orleans area has confirmed that much of the supply is coming in from China and is distributed to head shops, convenience stores and through the Internet. This drug is not useful as a bath product.

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) is monitoring the number of cases presenting to emergency departments (ED) across the state related to the use of “bath salts.” Between November 13, 2010 and May 16, 2011, there were a total of 71 ED visits by 65 patients for “bath salt” abuse. As of June 16, 2011, the number of related ED visits had risen to 86. A complete report of Michigan cases between November 2010 and March 2011 was published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6019a6.htm>).

How are “bath salts” packaged?

“Bath salts” are sold as crystalline powder in a small bag with names, such as Ivory Wave, Blow, Red Dove, Vanilla Sky, Aura, Zeus 2, Zoom, Bliss, Blue Silk, White Lightning, Ocean, Charge, Cosmic Blast, Scarface, Hurricane Charlie, Cloud 9, Energy 1, White Dove, and others.



Photo Source: Gulf Coast HIDTA

What do “bath salts” contain?

This product can contain one of many “designer drugs”. The most likely one currently used is MDPV (methylenedioxy pyrovalerone) but it could also contain mephedrone (the Khat derivative that is a Schedule I drug in Michigan).

Are “bath salts” legal?

No. The ingredient mephedrone is a Schedule I drug in Michigan. Currently, Michigan is pursuing legislation to add MDPV to the state’s Schedule I list. The DEA has determined that because MDPV is an analogue of a drug that is on Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), “law enforcement cases involving MDPV can be prosecuted under the Federal Analogue Act of the CSA.”

What is the pattern of abuse?

Most users are experienced drug users/abusers. Patients have primarily been young adults in their 20's to 30's. Some binge for 3-4 days. There is craving for more once the binge is over. "Bath salts" are snorted, ingested mixed with water, injected, or inserted rectally or vaginally.

What are the signs/symptoms of "bath salts" use?

Use of "bath salts" causes severe symptoms. Side effects include:

- severe paranoia
- violent behavior
- hallucinations
- chest pain
- seizures
- decreased need for sleep
- lack of appetite
- self-mutilation

Users frequently describe the high as "horrible" and report seeing demons, monsters, foreign soldiers or aliens. Some have symptoms for 2-3 days. Some require long term psychiatric care because their symptoms aren't improving.

Are there long term health problems that result from use of "bath salts"?

Yes. Even a one-time use of this drug can cause long term health effects including:

- kidney failure
- liver failure
- increased risk of suicide
- long term mental illness
- self-mutilation
- death

What should health care providers do if they receive patients who are "bath salt" users?

MDCH has provided a fact sheet for physicians on it website, www.michigan.gov/substanceabuseepi. MDCH has also designated the Michigan Poison Control Center (PCC) as its legal Agent to receive reports of cases. Health care providers are required to report suspected cases to the PCC under the mandatory Chemical Poisoning reporting rule [Public Health Code (R 325.71-325-75)]. Go to the above website for further information including the reporting form, fact sheets and letter of authority, or call the PCC at 1-800-222-1222 for more information.

Where can you get more information?

Call the Michigan Department of Community Health, 1-800-MI-TOXIC (648-6942) or go to www.michigan.gov/substanceabuseepi.